

## FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

**Submitted by:** Washoe County Air Quality Management Division  
and Nevada Division of Environmental Protection

**Finding:** Air quality management agencies in Nevada do not regulate burn and no burn days, rather it is left to the land managers' discretion to ignite prescribed fires only when conditions are acceptable. This allows land managers greater flexibility to effectively and efficiently reduce forest fuels within their jurisdictions.

**Background and Supporting Evidence:** In Nevada, the Washoe County Air Quality Management Division (WCAQMD) is responsible for air quality management in that portion of the Tahoe Basin within Washoe County, while the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP) has jurisdiction over the remaining area comprised of Carson City and Douglas County. Both of these agencies implement similar EPA approved Smoke Management Programs with compliance garnered through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) entered into with the primary land management agencies in the Tahoe Basin. In accordance with provisions specified in the MOUs, land managers must apply for a burn permit from the applicable regulatory agency for prescribed burning projects. Submittal of an accompanying smoke management plan may also be required, depending on the size of the prescribed fire and the distance to air quality non-attainment areas. Permits are then issued by the air regulatory agencies. Unlike in California, under Nevada's system, burn day forecasts are not issued. Rather, it is incumbent upon the land managers to ensure that meteorological conditions are favorable, from an air quality perspective, prior to ignition of the prescribed burn.

The Smoke Management Programs have been in effect for at least 10 years. Air quality monitoring data has been collected from stations in Nevada on the southeast (Stateline and Cave Rock) and northeast shore (Incline Village) of Lake Tahoe since 1990. Currently only ozone is monitored at the Incline Site but over the years CO, PM<sub>10</sub> (continuous and manual), PM<sub>2.5</sub> (manual), and NO<sub>x</sub> have been monitored on a limited basis. Incline has historically been WCAQMD's cleanest site and has not detected violations of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Additionally, smoke complaints received from nearby residents are minimal each burn season and agencies conducting the burns have been found to respond quickly and address the issue.

**Recommendation:** Based on an analysis of the Finding, the following recommendation should be made to the Governors: The air quality agencies and land managers in Nevada should continue to follow the same prescribed burning practices that are currently in place; and in the application of their Smoke Management Programs should consider all available sources of information in order to make better-informed decisions. The WCAQMD and NDEP should also continue to participate in basin-wide efforts to better understand air quality and meteorological conditions in the Basin which

will lead to the development of more useful technology to assist prescribed fire decision makers.

**Impacts of Implementation:** Implementation of this “no action” recommendation is not expected to result in impacts in terms of cost, funding source, staffing, or existing laws and regulations. No impacts are foreseen for the environment or on residents or businesses in the Tahoe Basin.

PROPOSED